

101 Reasons Why Water Baptism is Not Necessary to be Saved - Faith Facts

Thesis: *We are saved by the grace (gift) of God through a living faith, via the agency (baptism) of the Holy Spirit because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.*

Water baptism is a most important part of the Christian life. Since the earliest days, baptism has been consistently practiced by Christians to confirm their faith and relationship with the Father, Son, And Holy Spirit. Certainly a person with a sincere saving faith will be baptized (or if they were baptized as an infant will acknowledge and cherish that fact). Water baptism is a physical act that testifies to a spiritual event. But does the actual act of being baptized get one to heaven?

In this article we list and discuss for you theology enthusiasts out there the many passages of Scripture both for and against baptismal regeneration.

Christians sometimes assume that whenever they see the term *baptism*, that it is referring to water baptism. This is not always a correct understanding. The New Testament uses the term *baptism* in four different ways: baptism by water ([Acts 2:38](#), etc.), by the Holy Spirit ([Titus 3:3-9](#), etc.), by fire ([Matthew 3:11](#), etc.), and as a metaphor for the association believers have in Christ's death ([Romans 6:4](#), etc.).

Items 1 through 41 are concerned with how we are saved, that is how we get to heaven.

Many verses emphasize salvation by *grace through faith* without mentioning water baptism:

1. [John 1:12](#)
2. [John 3:14-18](#), [36](#) (whoever)
3. [John 5:24](#)
4. [John 6:29-40](#), [47](#), [69](#) (whoever, everyone)
5. [John 11:25-26](#) (whoever)

6. [John 12:46-50](#) (whoever)
7. [John 16:7-9](#) (not believe)
8. [John 17:20-22](#)
9. [John 20:31](#)
10. [Acts 2:21,33](#) (everyone)
11. [Acts 10:43-48](#) (whoever, water baptism follows belief and Holy Spirit's work of salvation)
12. [Acts 13:38-39](#), [48](#) (everyone)
13. [Acts 15:8-11](#)
14. [Acts 16:30-31](#) (answer to a direct question: What must I do to be saved?)
15. [Acts 26:18](#)
16. [Romans 1:16](#) (everyone)
17. [Romans 3:20-31](#) (all who believe)
18. [Romans 4:1-11](#)
19. [Romans 4:23-25](#)
20. [Romans 5:1-21](#)
21. [Romans 9:30-33](#) (whoever)
22. [Romans 10:4-13](#) (everyone, whoever)
23. [Galatians 2:15-21](#), [Galatians 3:1-28](#) (whoever, baptism secondary to faith)
24. [Galatians 5:5-6](#)
25. [Ephesians 2:8-10](#)
26. [Philippians 3:4-14](#)
27. [2 Thessalonians 2:16-17](#)
28. [Hebrews 4:2-3](#)
29. [1 Peter 2:6](#)
30. [1 John 1:5-10](#)
31. [1 John 4:15](#) (God abides in whoever confesses Christ)
32. [1 John 5:1](#), [10-13](#) (whoever)
33. Other verses mention *belief* without water baptism: [Luke 7:50](#); [John 2:11](#), [23](#); [John 4:39](#), [41](#); [John 7:38-39](#); [John 8:30-32](#); [John 9:35-36](#); [John 10:42](#); [John 11:45](#), [48](#); [John 12:11](#), [42-44](#); [John 14:1](#), [12](#); [John 20:31](#); [Acts 14:23](#); [Acts 20:21](#); [Romans 15:13](#); [Philippians 1:29](#); [Titus 3:8](#). There nine instances of conversion in the book of Acts without reference to baptism: [Acts 3:1-4:4](#), [Acts 5:1-14](#), [Acts 9:32-35](#), [Acts 11:19-24](#), [Acts 13:6-12](#), [Acts 13:42-52](#), [Acts 14:1](#), [Acts 17:10-12](#), [Acts 17:22-34](#). **Did the authors miss the opportunity to mention baptism in these many passages if it is so important?**
34. Many of the above verses use the language "whosoever" (King James) or

“whoever” or “everyone” who believes. This language is all-encompassing. That is, by the language of the text nothing else is required for salvation except faith. Thus, in addition to not mentioning water baptism, the all-encompassing language of whoever precludes other requirements. SO HERE WE HAVE THE THESIS OF SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH DEMONSTRATED IN THE *AFFIRMATIVE*.

35. Further, many verses specifically preclude works (apparently including baptism) as a way to salvation: [Acts 13:39](#); [Romans 3:20, 28](#); [Galatians 2:15-17](#); [Ephesians 2:9](#); [2 Timothy 1:9](#); [Titus 3:5](#); [Philippians 3:8-9](#) (“everything”), etc. Others say that we cannot boast before God—a similar concept ([Romans 3:27](#); [1 Corinthians 1:29](#)).

Note: some of these passages could be construed to mean we are not saved by the Law of Moses—the Old Testament law— leaving open that other works (“laws of Christ” and baptism) are necessary for salvation. However, other passages clarify that “works” are any works. See [Romans 3:20-27](#) (clearly speaking of moral law-- sin and righteousness--thus broader than ceremonial law of Moses); [Galatians 2:21](#), [Galatians 3:21-22](#) (“if a law”); [Galatians 3:25](#) (no longer a guardian law); [Titus 3:5](#). And please consider [Romans 13:10](#) in Young's Literal Translation: "Love therefore is the fulness of law." Note that in the Greek there is no "the" in front of "law," making law a general term and not a reference to Old Testament law. So Paul is making a general case that we are not saved by works of any kind. Jesus himself explains in [John 6:27-29](#) that the “work” we must do is to believe. Thus we are not saved by what we do; we cannot get to heaven by what we do. HERE WE HAVE THE THESIS OF GRACE THROUGH FAITH ALONE DEMONSTRATED IN THE *NEGATIVE*.

36. Baptism in the Bible typically follows one’s saving faith as an act of obedience after being saved. Examples: [Acts 2:41](#) and [10:44-48](#).

37. We listed numerous passages that say that forgiveness of sins comes with faith. There are also passages that indicate that forgiveness of sins is associated with repentance (without mention of water baptism), for example [Mark 1:15](#); [Luke 24:47](#); [Acts 3:19](#); [Acts 5:31](#); [Acts 19:4](#); [Acts 20:21](#); [2 Corinthians 7:10](#).

38. Faith and repentance are closely associated. They are like two sides of the same coin. You cannot turn toward Christ without turning away from sin. So the command to non-Christians is to repent and believe. All other commands to obedience in the New Testament, including water baptism, are to people who are

already Christians.

39. Having pointed out the above, we must clarify that the type of faith that saves is one that is obedient. [Ephesians 2:8-10](#) confirms that we are saved by grace through faith and not of our own doing, but through a faith that results in good works. confirms that we cannot be saved by a “dead” faith. Thus we are saved by a *living* faith. Someone who has a genuine faith will seek to conform their life to the will of God. confirms that even faith itself is a gift of God. Yet a living faith is still faith. Faith expressed is still faith. We would question whether a person who refused water baptism has a genuine (living) faith. A person who had received a saving faith would want to be obedient, thus would be baptized, not for salvation but because of it.

40. Yes, “works” are indeed necessary for salvation—Christ’s work ([Romans 5:19](#))! For us humans, works are an output rather than an input. In terms of a formula:

(a) Correct Formula: GRACE THROUGH FAITH = SALVATION + WORKS

(b) Incorrect Formula: GRACE THROUGH FAITH + WORKS = SALVATION

Formula (b) is biblically incorrect as well as logically incorrect. The first law of logic says that 2 contradictory things cannot both be true at the same time and in the same relationship. The definition of grace is unmerited favor and is a free gift ([Romans 5:15](#), [5:16](#), [6:23](#)). So, it would be merited favor if works are required for salvation. Something cannot both be unmerited and merited at the same time. This is precisely what Paul is arguing in [Romans 11:6](#) (“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”) and in [Galatians 2:9](#) (“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly.”)

41. Nowhere does the Bible say the words, “cannot be saved without water baptism,” or “an unbaptized believer is not saved.”

Items 42 through 59 pertain to [Acts 2:38](#), [Mark 16:16](#), [1 Peter 3:21](#), and [Acts 22:16](#)—passages which are often used to show that water baptism saves.

42. [Acts 2:38](#) in most translations says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for* the forgiveness of your sins....” But there are valid reasons why *for* in [Acts 2:38](#) does not necessarily mean “*in order to achieve*” forgiveness of sins. The Greek word *eis* (“for”) can have a variety of translations or

meanings. Possible meanings include "in," "into," "unto," "to," "towards," "at," or even "because of," "as a result of," or "in light of." There are many passages in the New Testament that show these various nuances in meaning: [Matthew 3:11](#), [10:41](#), [12:41](#), [28:19](#); [Mark 1:9](#); [Luke 5:14](#), [14:23](#); [John 4:5](#), [11:31](#); [Acts 2:25](#), [10:43](#), [19:3](#), [22:10](#); [Romans 4:20](#), [5:8](#), [5:12](#), [6:3](#); [1 Corinthians 10:2](#). Thus, whatever follows *eis* (for) may even be something that has already been accomplished. Robert Morey cites many Bible translations that render *eis* in [Acts 2:38](#) as "because of" or "as a result of" or "in light of." Also helpful is an essay by Lanny Tanton, a former Church of Christ preacher that changed his mind on this: [Change of Mind](#). *Eis* also "looks backward" in the Old Testament Septuagint ([Malachi 2:2](#), [2:11](#)).

43. The English dictionary gives about a dozen ways that the word "for" is used. For example, consider the statement, "John was beheaded for his faithfulness." Isn't it accurate to say that "for" does not mean "in order to obtain" in this sentence? Similarly, the statement "Take two aspirin for a headache" does not mean "Take two aspirin in order to get a headache."

44. Further regarding [Acts 2:38](#), *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (page 1357) says this, "The main verb in this verse is *metanoesate* (3340), meaning 'repent.' This refers to that initial repentance of a sinner unto salvation. The verb translated 'be baptized' is in the indirect passive imperative of *baptizo* (907) which means that it does not have the same force as the direct command of 'repent.' The preposition 'for' in the phrase 'for the remission of sins' in Greek is *eis* (1519), 'unto.' Literally it means 'for the purpose of identifying you with the remission of sins.' This same preposition is used in [1 Corinthians 10:2](#) in the phrase 'and were all baptized unto [eis] Moses.' These people were identifying themselves with the work and ministry of Moses. Repentance is something that concerns an individual and God, while baptism is intended to be a testimony to other people. That is why *baptistheto*, 'to be baptized,' is in the passive voice indicating that one does not baptize himself, but he is baptized by another usually in the presence of others."

45. Thayer's *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* confirms many alternative meanings to the Greek word *eis*.

46. People are saved after (1) *hearing* God's word ([Acts 2:22-37](#)). They then (2) *received* God's word ([Acts 2:41](#)) and (3) *believed* in Jesus ([Acts 10:43](#), [Romans 10:9-13](#)) for salvation. Peter's audience "gladly received his word"—and by necessary inference believed in their hearts and put their trust in Jesus—before they were water baptized ([Acts 2:41](#)). Salvation thus comes at the point of receiving God's word and taking it to heart.

47. Those who believed Peter's message clearly received the Holy Spirit *before* they were baptized. Peter said, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ([Acts 10:47](#)) Peter's first emphasis is on having received the Holy Spirit (just as we have); baptism comes later as a follow-up.

48. Scripture must be interpreted so that it harmonizes. Language is often not straight forward or literal, and interpretation is required. There are passages that *may seem* to be saying, on the surface, that we must do something to be saved (water baptism)—such as [Acts 2:38](#) or [Mark 16:16](#). But if they actually meant that, Scripture would be contradictory. Any concept or statement that is contradictory cannot be true. Note for example, that [Mark 16:16](#) does not specifically say that all who believe but are not baptized go to hell. If it did, it would contradict the "whoever" passages such as [John 3:16](#) or [Acts 10:43](#) (whoever believes shall be saved) and would also contradict the numerous passages that say we are not saved by works (, , , etc.). Similarly, [Acts 2:38](#) cannot mean that water baptism is necessary for salvation because [Acts 2:21](#) says that "*everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The way to harmonize these concepts is to understand that works such as water baptism are things that a true saved believer will do to be obedient. But (in the case of an adult convert) such works follow salvation. Thus we are saved by a *living* faith (). But faith expressed is still faith—and it is faith that saves us—not the works.

49. To emphasize, if *eis* has the meaning of "in order to be saved" in [Acts 2:38](#), it suggests that salvation is based on works—an idea that runs counter to the theology of Acts, namely: (a) repentance—and sins blotted out—often precedes baptism (cf. [Acts 3:19](#), [26:20](#)), and (b) salvation is entirely a gift of God, not procured via water baptism ([Acts 10:43](#) [cf. v. 47]; [Acts 13:38-39](#), [48](#); [Acts 15:11](#); [Acts 16:30-31](#); [Acts 20:21](#); [Acts 26:18](#)).

50. [Acts 2:44](#) speaks of "all who believed" as constituting the early church, not necessarily all who were baptized.

51. According to theologians Geisler and Howe (book *When Critics Ask*), in view of the many factors, "It seems best to understand Peter's statement in [Acts 2:38](#) like this: 'Repent and be baptized with a view to the forgiveness of sins' (or 'because of forgiveness of sins'). Believing (or repenting) and being baptized are placed together, since baptism should follow belief. But nowhere does it say, 'He who is *not baptized* will be condemned' ([Mark 16:16](#)). Yet Jesus said emphatically that 'he who does *not believe* is condemned already' ([John 3:18](#)). So neither Peter nor the

rest of Scripture makes water baptism a condition of salvation.”

52. [Mark 16:16](#), which is often used to support water baptismal regeneration does not appear in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts. So many scholars question whether it should even be considered part of Scripture. See [Got Questions on Mark](#).

53. Does [Mark 16:16](#) prove that a person must be baptized in order to be saved? No, it does not specify. It says that a person who believes and is baptized will be saved, and a person who does not believe is condemned. [Proverbs 30:6](#) and [1 Corinthians 4:6](#) are strict warnings not to add to God’s word. If you say that [Mark 16:16](#) states what happens to those who believe and are not baptized, when that verse is silent on that, you are adding to God’s word.

54. *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (page 1260) says about [Mark 16:16](#), “The word ‘believeth’ is *pisteuo* [4100], an aorist participle referring to one who has believed at some time in the past. Also, *baptistheis* (907), translated ‘is baptized,’ is an aorist participle but in the passive voice. This form refers to an act of outward obedience, in this case, baptism. Therefore, the correct translation here should be stated, ‘He who believed and who was baptized shall be saved.’ However, the Lord adds, ‘...but he that believeth not shall be damned.’ It should be noted that this negative statement does not include a reference to baptism, making it clear that what saves a person is living faith in Jesus Christ. This is made clear in [Ephesians 2:8](#), ‘For by grace are ye saved through faith....’ The word ‘saved’ is translated from the Greek word *sesosmenoi*, which is a perfect passive participle. It means that this salvation took place at some point in the past and is continuing on in the present, being accomplished by Jesus Christ Himself. If baptism were necessary for salvation, [Ephesians 2:8](#) and many other verses should have been translated ‘ye are saved through faith and baptism.’...Baptism is a distinct act of obedience apart from salvation. This is clarified by the order in which the words ‘believe’ and ‘baptize’ occur in the text...”

55. [1 Pet 3:21](#) (NIV): “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God...” [1 Pet 3:21](#) (KJV): “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.)” The body washed with pure water is a visible emblem of our changed hearts. The key word in the Greek in this sentence is *antitypos*, which means “a thing resembling another” ([Blue Letter Bible](#)). So the NIV rendering “symbolizes” is correct. [1 Peter 3:21](#) says that it is not the water that

saves us but the pledge of a good conscience towards God, which is symbolized by baptism. See [Got Questions on Peter](#).

56. Regarding [1 Peter 3:21](#), the notes in the *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* (pages 1539-1540) explains, "The expression 'baptism doth now save' should be understood in light of verse twenty: 'eight souls were saved by water.' Noah and his family, being in the ark, were able to pass safely 'through' the waters....In the same way, the term 'baptism' should be understood as the visible representation of deliverance through Christ, just as the ark represented deliverance from the waters of the flood. When a person accepts Christ, he is saved; when the believer is baptized, he is identified with the One who has delivered him (i.e. Jesus Christ)."

57. KJV's "by water" is incorrect; the Greek is "through water (*di udatos*)" per (NKJV, NIV, NASB, Green's Literal Translation, NRSV, Young's Literal Translation). Wasn't Noah saved before the flood ([Genesis 6:8](#))? So aren't believers saved before baptism in the same way, baptism being a symbol of a saving faith? It also seems significant that Peter here ([1 Peter 3:21](#)) explains his own statement by stating that baptism is "an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Christ."

58. Further regarding [1 Peter 3:21](#), is not referring to the the dirt on the surface of the body, but most likely to our sinful nature. The Greek word is *sarx* ([Blue Letter Bible](#)). So, Peter is saying specifically that water baptism does *not* remove our sinful nature. See [Filth of the Flesh](#).

59. [Acts 22:16](#) says, "Now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." According to the John MacArthur study Bible, "Grammatically the phrase, 'calling on His name,' precedes 'Get up and be baptized.' Salvation comes from calling on the name of the Lord ([Romans 10:9](#), [10](#), [13](#)), not from being baptized."

Items 60 through 76 are concerned with baptism of the Holy Spirit

Here's a helpful article: [Got Questions on Baptism of the Holy Spirit](#)

60. In [Acts 10:43-48](#) those who believed Peter's message clearly received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized. Before receiving water baptism, they believed, praised God and spoke in tongues, so they had already become children of God before receiving water baptism. Then Peter said, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So water baptism followed their salvation. *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*

(page 1372) says, “This is similar to the circumstances at Jerusalem and Samaria in that each time, many believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit at the same time (cf. [Acts 2:1-4](#), [8:14-17](#)). It is interesting to note that apostles were present in each instance. The special manifestation of the Holy Spirit here, which allowed these Gentiles to speak in tongues, proved that God gave the Gentiles the same ‘gift’ (v. 45) as the Jews. **Notice that the baptism of the Holy Spirit [normally] took place prior to water baptism. ‘Spiritual’ baptism is what actually places believers into the body of Christ while water baptism only demonstrates to others that a person is in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13)....**” [1 Corinthians 12:13](#) specifically confirms that baptism by the Holy Spirit is what places us in the body of Christ. Peter in [Acts 10:43](#) makes it clear that it is faith that produces remission of sins, and that water baptism comes later as a symbol of one’s new life in Christ. Also, we note that in , where Peter explains what happened in , he makes no mention of water baptism, and in [Acts 11:16](#) indicates that Holy Spirit baptism superceded water baptism of John the Baptist.

61. The situation in [Acts 8:14-17](#) is somewhat different from the ones in and however. The Samaritans received the laying on of hands and the Holy Spirit after water baptism. So it is obvious from this story that it is possible to be regenerated and not to have received the Spirit’s empowering presence yet. Even today, it is certainly true that we receive certain aspects of the Holy Spirit’s work at the point of regeneration and some afterward. The Holy Spirit is working in our lives before, during, and after water baptism. See <http://www.faithfacts.org/bible-101/christian-cram-course#holyspirit>. Certainly we should not put God in a box about how he works in a person’s life. There are some logical reasons why this situation occurred as it did. Apparently the apostles were not present when the original conversions took place. This was a group of Samaritans, who were not fully Jewish and there was a lot of hostility that existed between the Samaritans and Jews. It would have been desirable in this early ministry to receive apostolic approval to prove that this new church was “kosher.” This passage does not in any way indicate that water baptism saves.

62. [Romans 8:14](#): “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Similarly, [Romans 8:16-17](#): “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” Who would be “sons” or “children?” In modern figurative language, children would have the DNA of the father—having been “born again” ().

63. [Romans 15:13](#). “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in

believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Thus, our hope is in the power of the Holy Spirit through faith (not our power to obey or whatever legalistic requirement).

64. Included in the many things the Holy Spirit does is that he is active in the salvation of a person. He regenerates us, this being made quite clear in [Titus 3:5](#). He transforms us ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#)). He sanctifies us ([Galatians 5:16-23](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#)). Remembering that we are saved by a transformation of the heart—the Holy Spirit pours out God’s love in the heart ([Romans 5:5](#)), He seals God’s promises in believers’ hearts ([Ephesians 1:13-14](#)), and He strengthens the inner being ([Ephesians 3:16](#)). It is by his power that we have hope ([Romans 15:13](#)). Further, he shapes the individual’s community life to Christ’s ([Romans 8:1-17](#)), etc, etc. See also [Who Is the Holy Spirit](#).

65. [Matthew 3:11](#); [Mark 1:8](#); [Acts 1:5](#); [Acts 2:4](#); [1 Cor 6:11](#) shows that we are baptized, washed, justified, and sanctified by the Spirit of God. (We are washed by the Holy Spirit—not by water.) The Holy Spirit is everywhere in the Scriptures from beginning to end doing his work in the world and in people.

66. The Holy Spirit is the seal of the believer’s salvation ([Ephesians 4:30](#); [2 Corinthians 1:22](#); [Romans 8:9](#)), not water baptism. Indeed, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit when we believed ([Ephesians 1:11-14](#)), and even before at the *foundation of the world* ([Ephesians 1:3-12](#)).

67. [Titus 3:3-8](#) shows that it is the Holy Spirit that regenerates a person, not water baptism or any other work. Notice also that it is by the work of God that we are saved, and specifically not because of any righteousness things we have done. This is baptism (washing) of the Holy Spirit, which is mentioned in [Acts 1:5](#) and fulfilled in [Acts 2:4](#).

68. [2 Tim 1:9-14](#) shows that it is the power of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit— that saves us, not because of our works.

69. Many verses show that the Holy Spirit dwells in a person or is the helpmate of God’s or Jesus’ indwelling ([John 14:17](#); [Romans 8:9-11](#); [1 Corinthians 3:16](#), [6:19](#); [Galatians 4:6](#); [Ephesians 3:16-19](#); [2 Timothy 1:14](#); [1 John 4:13-17](#)). The Holy Spirit’s indwelling is the means whereby “Christ is in you.” Paul views this relationship as so close that he can even say “the Lord is the Spirit” ([2 Corinthians 3:17](#), [Galatians 4:6](#), etc.) Elsewhere, in [Galatians 2:20](#) Paul says, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Paul teaches that the Holy Spirit and Christ

work together in applying the resurrected life of Christ to the believer. Indeed, the Spirit's presence now is a guarantee, if you will, of the future bodily resurrection of the believer ([Romans 8:11](#)).

70. In further context, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God ([Romans 8:14](#)). What does it mean to be a son of God? We should think that in some sense in modern language it means that we have his DNA. He also intercedes for the Saints (8:27)—which is mentioned in the context of predestination (8:29). All this is to say that it is the Holy Spirit who is working salvation in the person. Just as our physical birth is not something we earn or have any control over, spiritual birth is something the God gives rather than something we earn or have any control over ([1 Peter 1:3-5](#)).

71. is an interesting passage. Here Jesus tells Nicodemus that unless one is born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Some might say that *water* here refers to the water being released when one is born physically by a woman. Others would say that *water* here means water baptism. But this latter interpretation seems quite unlikely, since Christian baptism had not been instituted yet and would have been meaningless to Nicodemus. (Others find reference to John's baptism in this statement, but Jesus nowhere makes John's baptism a requirement for salvation.) Remembering who Jesus is speaking to—a leading Jew—he is most certainly referring to Old Testament passages the Nicodemus would have been familiar with: [Isaiah 32:15](#), [Isaiah 44:3](#), and [Ezekiel 36:25-27](#). According the notes in *The Reformation Study Bible*, linguistic considerations point to understanding “water” and the “Spirit” as referring to a single spiritual birth. In these OT passages, the concept expressed is the pouring out of God's Spirit in the end times. The presence of such rich Old Testament imagery accounts for Jesus' reproof of Nicodemus ([John 3:10](#)) as a “teacher of Israel,” which he should have understood. *The Reformation Study Bible*, of note, also says that the passage emphasizes the priority and sovereignty of God in salvation, though it does not exclude the reality of human response in repentance and faith. So the message is that salvation is through baptism of the Holy Spirit, not water baptism.

72. Can the word *water* as used in [John 3:5](#) mean water baptism? Why didn't Christ say what he meant to say? If he really meant *baptism*—when he said *water*—by the same reasoning he evidently meant baptism in the next Chapter ([John 4:7-15](#)). Read again the story of the Woman at the Well and substitute the word *baptism* for *water* everywhere it is found in the story exactly as you substitute the word baptism for water in [John 3:5](#), and see what a story you make. False doctrines

always lead to muddy water.

73. Jesus baptizes via the Holy Spirit ([Mat 3:11](#) and [Mark 1:8](#)) and never personally baptized with water as far we know. If water baptism is so important, why didn't Jesus do so?

74. There is a close relationship between how we are saved and the gospel.

[Romans 1:16](#) says that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Understanding clearly from this passage that it is the power of God that saves (and not the power of a person), at the very least to deny that God the Holy Spirit is active in the believer is, we think, a gross distortion of the gospel, which we further demonstrate at

<http://www.faithfacts.org/world-religions-and-theology/church-of-christ#gospel>.

75. The Holy Spirit is most certainly active today, contrary to what some Church of Christ baptismal regenerationists believe. Denying the work of the Holy Spirit, especially as regards to salvation, is very close to being the unforgivable sin that the Bible speaks of in [Matthew 12:31-32](#) and [Mark 3:22-30](#).

76. [1 Corinthians 12:13](#) plainly states that "we were all baptized by one Spirit..." See [Baptism by the Holy Spirit](#).

The conclusion must be, it seems to us, that indeed we are saved by the spiritual baptism of the Holy Spirit creating an inner change in the heart rather than water on the skin. The Bible makes a distinction between spiritual baptism and water baptism ([Matthew 3:11](#)). But we would not put God in a box, and so this would not preclude the Holy Spirit working through water baptism as a means of God's grace— as the Holy Spirit works before, during, and after one is saved. But it does preclude the legalistic view that water baptism is a work of the individual that one must do to be saved.

Items 77 through 95 pertain to other Scripture passages and concepts on baptism

77. There is no record of the apostles ever receiving water baptism. Though they probably did, it would be a glaring omission for the writers of the New Testament to omit this if it is so important.

78. Paul separates baptism from the Gospel, saying, "Christ did not send me to

baptize, but to preach the Gospel” ([1 Corinthians 1:17](#)). If baptism is necessary for salvation, Paul would not have downplayed baptism. It is the Gospel which saves us ([Romans 1:16](#), [1 Corinthians 15:1-8](#)). Therefore, water baptism is not part of what saves us. See “What is the Gospel”:

<http://www.faithfacts.org/bible-101/what-is-the-gospel>.

79. Jesus implied in [Matthew 3:13-16](#) that water baptism is a *work of righteousness*. But [Titus 3:5](#) teaches that it is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”

80. Not once in the entire Gospel of John, written explicitly so that people could believe and be saved ([John 20:31](#)), does it give water baptism as part of the condition of salvation. It simply says over and over that people should *believe* and be saved (cf. [John 3:16](#), [18](#), [36](#)).

81. While a legalist may say, “Our salvation depends on a *proper* baptism.”—there is no terminology or concept of a “proper” baptism in the New Testament. This is simply a term that identifies the speaker as a legalist.

82. The thief on the cross was saved without water baptism. Some claim that water baptism was not necessary because the thief died under the Old Covenant. But because Jesus died BEFORE the thief, it follows that the thief was saved without water baptism AFTER the atonement. Another problem with the Old Covenant claim as to the thief on the cross comes from [Romans 2:12](#): “and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.” Was the thief on the cross judged by the law or by grace through faith alone? Of course, it was by faith alone. Finally, some claim that he must have been baptized previously. This assumption is not probable and seems suspect to fit a pre-conceived doctrine.

83. In addition to the thief on the cross, there are other instances in the Bible where a sinner was saved without baptism: *the paralytic man* in [Matthew 9:2](#); *the penitent woman* in [Luke 7:37-50](#); *the publican* in [Luke 18:13-14](#). See also: [Acts 15:9](#); [Acts 26:18](#); [Ephesians 1:11-13](#); [1 Jn 5:4](#); etc.

84. The apostle Paul ([Acts 9:6-9](#), [22:6-16](#), [26:12-23](#)) obeyed before he received water baptism. Was he saved before he was baptized? Yes! Ananias called him “brother Saul” in [Acts 22:13](#). He became a child of God—a true Christian—when he called on the name of the Lord (and obeyed Jesus) before being baptized. He had a living faith, not a “dead faith” when he called on the name of the Lord and was obedient prior to water baptism. Baptism was another—though certainly

important—event of obedience after he was saved. In [Acts 26:20](#), Paul makes the statement “...and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”(ESV) In the NIV, it is translated “...that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.” This confirms Paul’s understanding of his own conversion, as well as others, that salvation occurred before water baptism. Just before that he quotes Jesus as saying that people are “sanctified by faith in me [Jesus],” ([Acts 26:18](#))—further proving that salvation comes with faith. In [Acts 3:19](#) we see Paul making a similar statement: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.” So it is faith and repentance that save, without regard to water baptism.

85. In [Romans 4:9-11](#), Abraham was saved before the obedience of circumcision, which is the Old Testament correlation to New Testament baptism.

86. [Acts 15:1-12](#). Some men (falsely) taught that unless you are circumcised you cannot be saved. The apostles COULD have said, “Not circumcision anymore but baptism.” But instead Peter said, “No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” So they told Gentile believers to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, blood, but “missed their chance” to say that baptism is required.

87. Water baptism is a *sacrament*, like the Lord’s Supper. Both are symbols of the reality of our salvation in Christ. Just as we do not *literally* eat Christ’s body in the Lord’s Supper, we are not literally saved by water trickling over our skin.

88. Water baptism is like the ring in a wedding. We use the term “with this ring I thee wed.” The language indicates that we are *literally* married by the ring. But it is not the ring that marries a couple. It is the commitment under God. Similarly, water baptism is to a Christian what a uniform is to a soldier. The soldier puts on the uniform because he is ordered to. It identifies him outwardly as what he is in his person.

89. Water baptism is like physical birth, while our salvation is like conception prior to physical birth. Life began at conception, not at birth. Baptism does not initiate life, it was initiated earlier at the point of faith, that is, at the point of the work of the Holy Spirit.

90. Steve Morrison argues that “baptism is an *emblem* of washing our sins away. But even if someone says that this was literally washing their sins away, they

should probably still agree with these things:

- a. If it was the liquid water that literally took away the sins, then future sins would not be taken away unless a person was baptized again and again.
- b. It is not the water that is special, but rather the water as the identification with the blood of Christ.
- c. The Bible does not say people cannot have sins washed away without baptism. God is capable of taking away the sins of the thief on the cross, as well as early Christians who were martyred before they had the opportunity to be baptized.
- d. So, it is not the drops of water that take away anything. Rather, it is the pledge of a good conscience before God that connects us with Christ's blood, and baptism is an acknowledgment—an emblem, of that."

91. [Ephesians 2:1-10](#) explains that regeneration actually precedes faith, and the faith itself is a gift of God! See

<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/sproul01.html>.

92. Did Christ personally, at any time or place tell a sinner to be baptized FOR or IN ORDER to the Remission of Sin? If so, where and when? Why didn't Jesus regularly practice water baptism if it is so important?

93. "Washing" in [1 Cor 6:11](#) may not necessarily mean water baptism. [Revelation 1:5](#) and [Revelation 7:14](#) make it clear that we are washed by the blood of Christ!

94. The healing of Naaman in the Jordan River () does not mean that water baptism saves. The healing of leprosy is not evidence of salvation. Naaman did not even believe in God when he was healed.

95. What if a person met all the requirements to be saved, but was killed in a car wreck on his way to being baptized. Would he not be in heaven?

Items 96 through 101 pertain to historical interpretations

96. To the Church of Christ: Alexander Campbell in *Design by Baptism* p.262 said: "In this sense we are to understand what is said by Paul, that Christ sanctifieth and cleanseth the church 'with washing of water by the word.' [Ephesians 5:26](#), and in another place, that 'according to His mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and of renewing of the Holy Ghost' [Titus 3:5](#), and by Peter that

'baptism doeth save us' [1 Peter 3:21](#). For it is not the intention of Paul to signify that our ablution and salvation are completed by water, or that water contains in itself the virtue to purify, regenerate, and renew; nor did Peter mean that it was the cause of salvation, but only the knowledge and assurance of it is received in this sacrament: what is sufficiently evident from the words they have used. For Paul connects together the 'word of life' and 'the baptism of water;' as if he had said, our ablution and sanctification are announced to us by the Gospel, and by baptism this message is confirmed. And Peter after having said the baptism doth save us, immediately adds, that it is 'not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God' which proceeds from faith. But on the contrary, baptism promises us no other purification than by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ; which is emblematically represented by water, on account of its resemblance to washing and cleansing."

97. Also to the Church of Christ: Alexander Campbell in *Millennial Harbinger*, 1837, p.411-412 said: "But who is a Christian? I answer, every one that believes in his heart that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God; repents of his sins, and obeys him in all things according to his measure of knowledge of his will. . . . I cannot make any one duty the standard of Christian state or character, not even immersion into the name of Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and [cannot] in my heart regard all that have been sprinkled in infancy without their own knowledge and consent, as aliens from Christ and the well-grounded hope of heaven. Should I find a Pedobaptist [one baptized as an infant] more intelligent in the Christian Scriptures, more spiritually-minded and more devoted to the Lord than a Baptist, or one immersed on a profession of the ancient faith, I could not hesitate a moment in giving the preference of my heart to him that loveth most. Did I act otherwise, I would be a pure sectarian, a Pharisee among Christians."

98. To immersionists: The early church document the *Didache* (c.125 A.D.) ch.7 p.379 said: "baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if thou have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, in warm. But if thou have not either, pour out water thrice upon the head into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

99. Also to immersionists: In another early church document, *Anonymous Treatise on Re-baptism* (254-257 A.D.) ch.5 p.669-670: On speaking of Cornelius said, "And there will be no doubt that men may be baptized with the Holy Ghost without water, as thou observest that these were baptized before they were baptized with water; that the announcements of both John and of our Lord Himself were satisfied, forasmuch as they received the grace of the promise both without the

imposition of the apostle's hands and without the laver [baptismal font], which they attained afterwards. And their hearts being purified, God bestowed upon them at the same time, in virtue of their faith, remission of sins; so that the subsequent baptism conferred upon them this benefit alone, that they received also the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ, that nothing might appear to be wanting to the integrity of their service and faith."

100. To the Church of Christ: In an extensive study of what the early church fathers said about baptism, Steve Morrison (<http://www.biblequery.org/>) says, "We cannot find a single person in history who held to both believer's baptism plus all are lost who are not immersed for remission of sins. In other words, according to the doctrine of many Churches of Christ, outside of the New Testament we cannot find in history a single person who had any possibility of going to heaven, until after the restoration movement started, and even Alexander Campbell was never baptized for remission of sins."

101. Also to immersionists: And finally, for the record, the word baptism does not necessarily always mean immersion. For example, in [1 Corinthians 10:1-4](#) the Israelites were baptized by only getting their feet wet, while it was the Egyptians who got immersed. [Luke 11:38](#) is a reference to the washing of hands, not of total body immersion. In [Mark 7:4](#) baptism is described as washing of vessels, which is not necessarily immersion but could be pouring or scrubbing. [Hebrews 9:10](#) speaks of "various ceremonial washings." The word here is *baptismos*. The ceremonial washing, or baptisms, that follow are rites of purification in the Old Testament (cf. [Hebrews 9:13-31](#)). In all of these ceremonial washings, the method of application was sprinkling. In fact, all Old Testament purifications or washings were by sprinkling ([Numbers 8:7](#), [19:19](#), [Leviticus 14:7](#), etc). Doesn't it stand to reason that New Testament Jewish Christians would have appreciated that method of baptism?

Conclusion:

(a) We get to heaven by God's grace through a genuine living faith in Jesus. The view that water touching skin is what saves us is a superficial view of the doctrine of salvation.

(b) Requirements of a "proper" baptism are not biblical and are a mark of legalism—especially when combined with other works requirements.

(c) However, anyone who refuses to be baptized probably does not have a genuine faith.

“Christian baptism, which has the form of a ceremonial washing (like John’s pre-Christian baptism), is a sign from God that signifies inward cleansing and remission of sins ([Acts 22:16](#); [1 Corinthians 6:11](#); [Ephesians 5:25-27](#)), Spirit-wrought regeneration and new life ([Titus 3:5](#)), and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit as God’s seal testifying and guaranteeing that one will be kept safe in Christ forever ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#); [Ephesians 1:13-14](#)). Fundamentally, Baptism signifies union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection ([Romans 6:3-7](#); [Colossians 2:11-12](#)), and this union with Christ is the source of every element in our salvation ([1 John 5:11-12](#)). Receiving the sign of baptism in faith assures those baptized that God’s gift of new life in Christ is freely given to them. At the same time, it commits them to live in a new way as disciples of Jesus.” (**The Reformation Study Bible**, page 1623.)

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